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Jesus Christ, the Heart of Christianity

BY IVER M. JOHNSON

God has spoken unto us in His Son. Hebrews 1:1.

THE personality of Jesus Christ is the vital center of Christianity. Christian groups have differed in their interpretations of the Bible, and in their theological creeds, and in matters of ecclesiastical polity, but all Christians have united in a common confession of faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Master.

The scholars of the church have tried in all ages to arrive at an intellectually satisfying interpretation of his person, but have never ceased to believe that in him the supreme word about God and life and destiny has been spoken to men. Where theologies have been halting and hesitant, the heart has always found the language of worship and adoration appropriate when applied to him who has been for millions the Way and the Truth and the Life. The highest titles which the vocabulary of man can frame have been given to Christ; and the titles have not been honorific merely, but descriptive of the spiritual relationship which binds the hearts of men to him.

Among the Hebrews he was called the Messiah, the One through whom God's gracious purpose of redemption was to be carried out and the prophetic hopes of the centuries fulfilled. The educated Greek Christian called him the Logos, the Word of God, the Incarnate Reason, because in Jesus Christ God had manifested himself in the flesh, and revealed his love and grace within the limitations of human personality. Plato said that beauty is the visibleness of truth, and the Gentile Christian said that in Jesus the truth about God had been expressed in the beautiful language of human life.

It is because Christ does for men what no other person has ever done or can do, that he occupies a position of unique mastery and power in the spiritual world.

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It is this fact which makes the words of Charles Lamb something more than the expression of religious exaltation, or the hasty verdict of the feelings: "If Shakespeare were to come into this room we should all rise up to meet him; if Christ were to come into it, we should all fall upon our knees and kiss the hem of his garment."

I

For one thing, the personality of Christ is central in our thinking about God.

One of the deepest yearnings of the human heart is the yearning to come to terms of understanding with the power upon which man is dependent. Every religion springs out of man's sense of helplessness, and is the appeal of humanity to the Unseen for help against the tragic elements of experience. Religion is the way in which men seek to make life livable, and to draw upon the resources of the superhuman world for power to surmount the destructive elements of human life. Men hunger for a world with meaning and sense at the heart of it; they desire the divine assistance in the shaping of their destiny; they cannot permanently accept an interpretation of the universe which does despite to that which is most sacred and precious in their lives. The pictured gods of the nations are just so many ways of spelling out the mystery of life, and yet they do represent, even in their grotesque and puerile forms, the deep hunger of the soul for the companionship of God.

The little boy who stood patiently before the photograph of his missionary father framed upon the wall, and said to his mother, anxiously awaiting the return of the loved one, "I wish father would come out of the frame," spoke more wisely than he knew of a desire that has revealed itself in perverted forms in the idolatries of the nations, and has sometimes got itself expressed in the crude theologies of the primitive peoples of the world. It is a desire which has stirred the hearts of men from the beginning of time and was most adequately answered when God in Christ entered human life—stepped out of the frame, as it were, of the physical universe—and bodied himself forth in human flesh. The doctrine of the Incarnation is the vital center of Christian faith and the answer of God to one of the deepest needs of the human spirit.

It has never been easy to believe in the friendliness of God, and it is not easy today. There are so many things in life that are hard and tragic, not easily squared with the creeds of the church. Christian men hold on to their faith in a Christlike God, in spite of appearances to the contrary, without pretending to solve every mystery that shadows man's pathway through the years.

Apart from Jesus Christ it has been difficult for men to keep the fact of the personal love of God clear and vivid. To believe that the Power that holds the world in the leash of its control is a kindly Power; that the Wisdom that has evolved the marvels of this mysterious universe is a Wisdom touched with pity for human frailty; that the Mighty Will back of the energies that move the heavens and the earth is a Will inspired by a love that suffers when men go wro and patiently seeks to redeem them from their si requires more than the validation of the philosophe reason; it is a conviction that has come most convin ingly and most certainly only to those who have a cepted the teachings of Christ and have felt the pow of his spirit. It is Jesus Christ who has made the lo of God credible.

Philosophy has often tended to deal with the pro lem of God in terms of the abstractions of the intelle and to lose itself in the arid wastes of speculatio Plato said: "It is hard to find the father and maker this world, and after you have found him, to decla him to all is impossible." The God of the philosoph has always seemed remote from the practical interes of religious men. The primary data of religious fai have been found in the experiences of the saints rath than in the speculations of the thinkers. To be sur the great intellects in the philosophic tradition of t Western world have said much that is helpful to faith yet they leave unsaid the one thing the heart mo desires to know. Men still stand before the Sphinx an ask whether the universe is friendly. For humani wants a God to whom it can pray, with whom it ma have fellowship, and from whom it may receive he and strength in the moral battle of life.

Nor do the non-Christian faiths of mankind see adequate in making the sense of God's fatherhood reality in human experience. Comparative religion making it plain that the various religions of the wor contain much of truth, but the sense of God's friendl ness is dim and vague and uncertain. Hinduism teach that God is near, but it is lacking in the sense of Holy Love that is centered in a Personal God; M hammedanism teaches that God is an Almighty So ereign, but forgets that he is the loving Father of ma kind; Confucianism teaches that man lives in the mid of a great network of social relationships, but fails emphasize that in the meeting of our obligations an in the doing of the work of the world, man may ha the help of the living God whose presence is the i spiration of human service.

It is Jesus Christ who has put the capstone on all man's thinking about God. In him, God has shine forth and spoken to bewildered men the one word th most needed to be said. Through him we come know God as real, and to be sure of his grace. Throug philosophy men might reach the conclusion that t universe is founded in reason; through conscience me may conclude that the world is a moral order, th there is a Power not ourselves making for righteou ness; through science man may conclude that the un verse is pervaded by law and order; but it is on through Christ that men have been able to come to t Father, to enter into an experience of his friendline and to recognize in him the Savior and Lover of the souls.

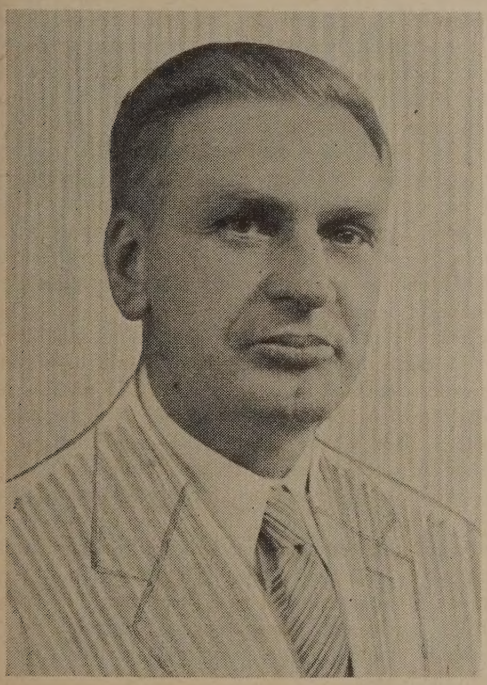
Jesus Christ is, therefore, the most priceless posse sion of the race, because of his sure sense of God love, and his power to communicate that sense God's Fatherhood to all those who trust him and fo low him.

O Saul, it shall be a Face like my face that receives thee.
A Man like to me thou shalt love and be loved by forever.
A Hand like this hand shall throw open the gates of new life to thee. See the Christ stand.

II

The personality of Christ is central likewise in interpreting the spiritual experience of the church.

Religious truths are best studied in the light of the highest personal illustrations of those truths; as Phillips Brooks put it suggestively years ago, truth is best understood when projected through somebody's per-



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sonality. It is the personal incarnations of truth that most influence men. One turns therefore with interest to the life of Paul, in whom the Jesus of history had become embodied as the Christ of experience. Paul was a great mystic, whose life of faith was nourished not only on the historic facts of Jesus' life in Palestine, but by a living fellowship with the Christ whose spiritual presence overleaped all boundaries of time and space.

Paul the theologian had a mind that ranged through many subtleties of the intellect and penetrated the profoundest secrets of time and eternity; but Paul the man had a very simple faith. The living substance of it was easily stated and he was always eager to commend it to others. Before the Jewish Sanhedrin, before Roman governors, in conference with the leaders of his churches, and before the skeptical philosophers of Athens, he continually affirmed the simple things that constituted the creed upon which his life was built: that he had seen Christ in the spirit; that his life had been changed in every fiber and that he was converted by the contact of Christ with his own soul. The love of Christ had flowed into his life and transfigured it, so that he measured his duty by Christ's standards, and interpreted his sufferings in the light of Christ's cross, and found the inspiration for his own eager desire to save men in the everlasting love of God revealed in Jesus Christ, who had loved him and given himself for him.

It is impossible to dismiss this experience of Paul as pious hallucination or to explain it away with the learned jargon of the schools. It was an experience of amazing moral fruitfulness, and the dynamic of one of the most wonderful missionary careers in the annals of the human race. With the gospel of redemption through the living presence of Christ, he confronted every moral situation, and turned the currents of history into new channels. He took it to Jerusalem and planted the banner of the new faith within the citadel of formal Judaism; he took it to Corinth and the devotees of sensual cults listened to the story of Jesus and were lifted into newness of life; he took it to Rome and in the shadow of the imperial palace brought men face to face with a spiritual fact which would outlast all the dynasties of power and rule in men's hearts when the thrones of the Caesars had crumbled into dust.

To explain such a marvelous moral phenomenon as a psychological device for escaping the difficult problems of life or to reduce it to the status of an opiate, is to substitute rhetoric for reason, and theory for fact. Spiritual experiences of such magnitude require an explanation that goes deeper than the formulas of the psychologist or the definitions of a materialistic metaphysics.

The fact of Christ's spiritual presence with men has been the abiding spiritual continuum of the church's history. Men have varied in their theological interpretations, and in their ecclesiastic affiliations; but despite the accidents of temperament and the differences of mental background, the Christ of experience has been the center of the church's loyalty and the secret of its spiritual power. It has risen in influence when Christ has been magnified, and dwindled in spiritual effectiveness when Christ has been ignored or misrepresented.

There is, to be sure, much in the history of the church that obscures the meaning of Jesus Christ. The pages of its history show us the hermit and the anchorite forsaking the sanctities of home and the activities of society; they show us the philosopher and the theologian beclouding the face of Christ with the dust of controversy; they show us the ecclesiastic with his passion for pomp and mystery and ceremonial; they show us the inquisitor and the heresy-hunter kindling the fires of persecution; they show us the crusader wading in blood to rescue the Holy Sepulcher from the hands of the infidel; and yet beneath all this ignorance and turbulence, beneath the subtleties of the intellect and the dark passions of the heart, beneath the strife of opinion and the clash of marching armies, Christ has been potent in the life of his church, and potent according as he has been understood and exem-

plified. In the magnificent words of St. John, men and societies have grown to be like him when they have seen him as he is.

George Matheson, though blinded in his fleshly eyes, saw that Christ is the eternal contemporary of man and adequate to the solution of the problems of every new generation, and put the glory of it into words that sound like a rhapsody: "Son of man, whenever I doubt of life I think of Thee. Nothing is so impossible as that Thou shouldest be dead. I can imagine the hills to dissolve in vapor, and the stars to melt in smoke, and the rivers to empty themselves in sheer exhaustion, but I feel no limit in Thee. Thou never growest old to me. Last century is old, last year is an obsolete fashion, but Thou art not obsolete. Thou art abreast of all the centuries, I have never come up with Thee, modern as I am."

Every fresh discovery of Jesus Christ has meant an access of moral power, an enlargement of spiritual vision, a new and vital sense of God. It is the Christ of personal experience who has been the glory of the church's history. In this tragic year of our Lord, looking out at Christmastime upon a world so forgetful of what he stood for, we Christians may once again serve our generation by giving to the world a living demonstration of his spirit incarnate in life.

How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given,
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven.
No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him still, the dear Christ enters in.

III

The personality of Jesus Christ is central in our hopes for the world.

In Ibsen's great drama, "The Emperor and the Galilean," Julian the Apostate is represented as having a dream in which he fancied himself carried to another planet from which he could look down on our earth where he had destroyed the Christian faith, and uprooted the memory of Jesus of Nazareth.

> But behold, there came a procession by me on the strange earth, where I stood. There were soldiers and judges and executioners at the head of it and weeping women followed. And lo, in the midst of the slow moving array was the Galilean—alive, and bearing a cross on his back. Then I called to him and said, "Whither away, Galilean?" and he turned his face to me and smiled, nodded slowly and said, "To the place of the skull."

Christ is not so easily got rid of as his enemies have imagined. When men have thought themselves quit of him he reappears in strange places and confronts them at times when they least expect him. That is just what one would have the right to expect from the Christ of the New Testament. For the Christ whom Christians worship must be seen in the perspective of eternity. As one of his early interpreters put it, he is the Alpha and the Omega; not a chance item in the world's affairs, but the revelation of the Eternal Purpose of God working itself out in human history.

Back of the significant unrest of this generation i the personal influence of Jesus Christ. As Studdert Kennedy said shortly before his death, the moder world is not quite comfortable about Jesus. The gian wrongs of our day cast a very dark shadow becaus the light of the God of love shining in the face of Jesu Christ is so searchingly present in our world. In th presence of his ideals, every wrong thing, no matte how long condoned or tolerated, stands out in all it stark ugliness. Humanity has come up out of man storms of disillusionment, and has pursued many tortu ous pathways, until in our generation the word o Christ, as the Way and the Truth and the Life, shine forth with a new luster and with an absolutely un precedented significance.

It is beginning to dawn upon thoughtful students o our civilization that the world cannot be saved on an other terms than Christ's. He stands today as in th olden time, pointing men to the friendly road of co operation and brotherhood and justice. His teaching are seen to be, not the mouthings of a deluded fanatic nor the impossible dreams of a visionary, but the mes sage of a Teacher sent from God, who has spoken th words of eternal life to the world. The alternativ would seem to be clear: humanity must take Jesu seriously or perish.

Christ is a necessity, not a luxury. That would seem to be a truth that has emerged out of all the blundering experiments of human history. Old phrases may have lost their magic, old forms of thought become obsolete. But Christ is still the inspiration of the noblest servants of humanity, and alone has the message that can save the world. Peace and strength are to be found in him as in the ancient time when the weary and the heavyladen and the sinful found in him their succor and their hope. His life reminds one of that sea of glass mingled with fire that John saw on Patmos, pure and transparent as crystal, and yet capable of flaming enthusiasms that are like a bolt of fire in the blood.

In times of moral corruption when men are tempted to accommodate themselves to the standards of a degraded society, his strong, brave figure puts courage into the heart and rallies the wavering consciences of men. In times of disillusionment, when the light of faith burns low and men's hopes of a better world grow dim, his revelation of a Love that endures at the heart of the world renews men's confidence like a pledge of victory. In ages of cynicism, when men are tempted to think meanly of themselves and their fellows, he infects them with his own undiscourageable faith in the possibilities of human nature. And in hours when life seems hard and tragic, his merciful figure upon the cross, committing his soul into the keeping of the Everlasting Father in the hour when the heavens were black and God seemed to be in eclipse, strengthens men's faith in the goodness of life, and helps them to believe that behind all the storms that beat across the landcape of human life is a Love that is wiser than all human wisdom, and more just than man's measuring rods of right, and more tender than all earthly compassion.

The Stars Still Shine!

By Everett W. Palmer

And there were in the same country shepherds, abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night, and, Lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them and the glory of the Lord shone round about them. Luke 2:9, 10.

Where is he that is born King of the Jews? We have seen his star in the east and are come to worship him. Matthew 2:2.

ROSWELL BARNES of the Federal Council of Churches some time ago told a group of us about an experience he had while vacationing in the mountains. One evening he went out of doors and lay upon the grass with no thought in his mind except the delight of enjoying his laziness. The daylight faded into dusk, the dusk blended into darkness, and then the stars began to appear. At first he scarcely noticed them, but as they grew in number and brightness he became increasingly aware of them. While he lay there reveling in the wonder of the scene, sensing the vastness of space and time, the mystery of infinity, the majesty and power of God, it suddenly occurred to him that he hadn't really looked at the stars for years. And he said to himself: "That's what's the matter with me and my generation. We have lost our vision of the stars."

How easily we lose our vision of the stars! The routine of daily tasks, the disappointments and troubles which come, the problems which are ever present, and especially the news which our radios and newspapers carry, all tend to give us a wrong perspective, to make us downhearted, pessimistic, even cynical—in a word, to forget the stars.

But Christmas bids us look up and behold them, shining. The shepherds on the hillside, the wise men on their journey, the humble stable bathed in light invite us to escape our earthbound littleness, to conquer our despair, to lift our faces and remember that the stars still shine.

I

In the first place, let us remember, this Christmastide, that the star of *human decency* still shines. Terrible and insane though this war is, innate human decency lives on. Despite philosophies of hatred and the propaganda of tyranny, despite the cruelties and stupidity of these times, the star of brotherhood shines on.

Last winter, before the German armies came to the rescue of their Italian allies the Greeks made memorable progress—that is, military progress. One of the Albanian strongholds captured by them bore the well-nigh unpronounceable name, Argyrokastron. But a story originated there which we need to remember.

It is the story of an American correspondent who told of seeing a Greek woman weeping as she went among the bodies of young Italians lying crumpled and sprawled in the streets. Some of them were severely wounded, some dying, many dead—all of them scarcely more than boys. She went from one to the other, this Greek woman, binding up the wounds of the living, caring for them as if they were not her enemies, but her sons. "They're too young to die, too young to die," the reporter heard her saying over and over again like a refrain. There were women in Italy who had given birth to those soldiers, nurtured and cared for them, invested all of a mother's hope and toil and love, and then wept helplessly to see them go away. Now these, their sons, were awkward blotches on a city's street, bleeding and perishing for the want of a mother's care. All of this, and more, was in the Greek woman's heart, for women are women and mothers are mothers the world over. As she cared for them,

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she represented the heart of all motherhood, bigger than all the armies of the world, reaching over every barrier in the world. And more, she represented the innate decency which lives in human hearts despite the storms of hatred and murder now sweeping the world.

During the past few years the plight of refugees from Germany and Austria has been heavily on our hearts. They haven't all been Jews by any means. Over two-fifths of the refugees entering this country have been Christians. For the most part they represented top ranking professional and business people, doctors, lawyers, ministers, university professors, merchants, manufacturers—people who have been torn from their homes overnight, some fleeing for their lives, some separated from their families, all of them penniless and deprived of means for support. To care for these people, arrange and supervise their re-establishment, and make possible the beginning again of normal life has constituted a most imperative Christian duty. Who has contributed most generously to

make possible this service for Christians? It has been the Jews. Last year it was a gift of $100,000 from the Jewish Refugee Committee which kept the refugee committees, both Catholic and Protestant, from closing their doors.

Despite the depravity of some, the spirit of human decency lives on. It is a star shining for us. Let us make it shine even brighter.

II

In the second place, may we remind ourselves this Christmas that the star of *world-wide Christian fellowship* still shines.

A neighboring minister tells of an incident which occurred in Nanking, China, on Christmas eve three years ago. A friend of his, a woman missionary, had stayed in the city when Japanese troops took it over. During the saturnalia of crime and brutality which followed she remained at her post as head of a hospital, serving the terrified and stricken people as best she could. On the evening before Christmas she went into the small garden of the hospital compound, completely disconsolate and exhausted. The lights from the hospital illumined the compound sufficiently for her to read, so she opened the New Testament and began to read aloud the Christmas story. When she got to the passage "Glory to God in the highest," a deep gutteral voice from the darkness joined hers and continued, "and on earth, peace, good will toward men." Startled, she leaped back, then paused and asked, "Who are you?" The man, a Japanese soldier, answered, "I'm a Christian, too."

All over the world there are people singing Christmas carols, reading the stories of Christmas to themselves and their children, people lifting their faces to the sky and saying, with deep sincerity, "I'm a Christian, too."

Here is a remarkable phenomenon of our times. With pagan philosophies and practices breaking the world into hostile units, tearing the body of humanity to shreds with selfish competitions and conflicts, the world-wide fellowship of Christians has continued to grow in strength. War can't break it. Nothing can stop it. It's a star shining for us. Let us lift our eyes, follow it, and make it grow the brighter.

III

In the third place, the star of *faith* still shines. That which is happening in the world does not require that we lose faith in men. To be true, it is tragic evidence of the depths to which men can sink. But there is more to be seen of men than what the sins of greed and hate and war reveal.

Despite some men's cynicism about truth, there are other men who love truth. Recently, when working for several hours in the New York City Library, I was surprised to find it so crowded. Earnest, serious people filled room after room, floor by floor. For the most part they were scholars, men and women who had fallen in love with truth and couldn't let her go. Were such people gathered together from all over the world, what an army they would make!

And, despite some men's cruelty, there are other men who love mercy. I think it is not an overstatement to say that never were more people concerned about the plight of the underprivileged, about the welfare of children, about the protection of women, about the cure of war, than now.

Furthermore, despite some men's selfishness there are other men who gladly sacrifice for the noblest. On our bulletin board are the pictures of missionaries most recently sent out by our church. Every one of them is a choice person with training, ability and character far above average. Had they elected to enter the professions or business they could expect wages far in excess of what they will receive as missionaries. There are men of cruel selfishness in the world, but there are those, too, who gladly sacrifice for what is noble. We have reason to have faith in man.

Much more, we have reason to keep faith also in God. He is not to blame for the darkness which blights the earth. His will is, "Peace on earth, good will toward men." Because his will is being disobeyed does not mean that he is being destroyed; quite the contrary, it means that man is being destroyed—by himself. We can be sure that Almighty God will outlive the vain and strutting men of our times. Long after they have turned to dust and the memory of them is lost, the glory and greatness of Christmas will be shining in men's faces; the power of Jesus will be fresh and strong in men's lives; and the redeeming love of God will be known in humble hearts. The star of faith is shining: faith in man, faith in God. Let us lift our eyes, and following it, make it shine the brighter.

IV

Because the stars of brotherhood, Christian fellowship and faith are shining, another star is shining. It is the star of *hope*. So long as men have an innate sense of decency, truth and goodness, justice and mercy will live in the world. So long as a world-wide Christian fellowship continues, the broken and bleeding world has a physician for its healing, and bonds of love to bind it into brotherhood. So long as we keep our faith in men, and faith in God, we have moral power and patience to give our best for the highest. So long as those stars shine, another shines—the star of hope.

Joseph Fort Newton, in one of those gems he gives to the press each day, has called our attention to the painting by Watts entitled "Hope." It's a good picture to be looking at these days. A woman is sitting on the globe of the world with a harp in her hand. Above and beyond is a dark night sky in which but one tiny star dimly shines. But the woman does not see the star. She is blindfolded. And every string on her harp is broken, save one. Yet she sits poised, her hand eager to strike the string, confident that light will come and music will sound.

There is more than one star shining for us, and nothing need blind us to their beauty. And we have more than a broken harp for our music: all the music of heaven is sounding for our ears. We are a people

who can live in the radiance of hope—a star still shining down upon us. Let us follow it, and lo, it will shine yet brighter.

Have we been going about dullhearted and discouraged, immersed in ourselves, eyes locked to the earth? Do our troubles and the tragedy of the world cause us to despair? Well, let us stand in company with the Shepherds and Wise Men. Let us lift our eyes and see that the stars still shine—the stars of brotherhood, world-wide Christian fellowship, faith in man and God, and hope.

I remember a legend which said that as the Wise Men followed their star it grew brighter and brighter, until at last it brought them to a Cradle and a Babe, bathed in radiance. Even so, as we follow these stars they will grow brighter, for us and other men. And they will lead us to the beginning of new and nobler life—to a Cradle and a Babe!

The Light On the Lord's Face

By Edgar DeWitt Jones

God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. II Corinthians 4:6.

I APPROACH this text with awe. I feel about this bit of Scripture as I imagine a mountain climber who has several high peaks to his credit might, as he views with commingled eagerness and reverence the highest peak of all. I am sure I cannot reach the top of this mountain, perhaps not even attain the timberline, but it will be something to tarry in the foothills of so impressive a passage of Scripture.

I

"The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

The apostle is not using the word "face" here merely in the sense of features. As employed in this text, the word "face" is that figure of speech called synecdoche, in which a part is used for the whole. As, for example, this exclamation from Tennyson's "Enoch Arden," as he glimpsed the infinite ocean: "A sail! a sail!" Meaning, of course, a ship.

Actually, we do not know much about the features of Jesus Christ. No portrait of Jesus was ever painted from life. No sculptor made any representation of him. The Gospel narratives do not contain a description of the person of Jesus. There are hints as to his eyes, his hands, his feet, his speech, and while these are suggestive they do not supply enough material from which to compose a picture. The artists have done fairly well in putting Jesus upon the canvas, but their imagination has often gone astray. They have shown us but a pale replica of the original. Let me cite a point: the artists who have shown us a bareheaded out-of-doors Christ have forgotten that no Oriental goes without a head covering as he walks or rides beneath the fiercely blazing sun. This is a small matter, but it is significant.

When St. Paul here speaks of "the face of Jesus Christ" he means not only his countenance but his character, personality, being. Jesus was the Good News incarnate, the Gospel in human flesh, the Way, the Truth, come to life. In a certain sense, the New Testament is Christ; the creed is Christ; the church is Christ. The Gospel is the teaching, example, religion, mind of Christ. Christ is the Alpha and the Omega of the Christian faith. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself," is a statement of tremendous implications. Be it remembered that Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father"; also, "I and the Father are one." "The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" is one of the profoundest truths of our holy faith. "In him was life, and the life was the light of men."

II

There was upon the face of Jesus the light of an incredible gladness.

There can be no doubt of this, if we take the New Testament for what it says. The artists have almost always depicted the Christ as suffering, pain-drenched, a "man of sorrows." This is a partial picture, based upon but one aspect of his life and ministry. It is not the Christ of the Gospel whom little children loved, ran to and not away from, clambered upon his knees, loved to be with.

> "An' He that has taen us for kith and kin,
> Tho' a Prince o' the far awa',
> Gaithert them roon Him whaur He sat,
> An blisset them ane an' a'."

There was something zestful and refreshing in the personality of the Master. The word "rejoice" was often on his lips. His "Be of good cheer" was like a trumpet call. Might it not be that the common people heard him gladly because of the radiance that pervaded his personality? "And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth." There have been numerous sermons on "The Joy of Jesus," though there have not been as many as are warranted by the facts as set down by his biographers.

Imagine what the "light on the Lord's face" must have meant to those burdened, discouraged, sorrowing persons who came into Jesus' life and were never the same again. Think of what Mary Magdalene saw in that face; what the lepers discovered there; what the Canaanitish woman, the sadhearted Jairus and that social outcast Zaccheus beheld in the light of that face! This much we know: they caught a vision of a new way of life. They felt the warmth of a love that extended to the depths of their sad hearts and made them glad. Thus inspired, they arose on stepping stones of their dead selves to higher things. The light on Jesus' face illumines the pages of the New Testament and shines into obscure passages making them clear and understandable.

Jesus spoke of himself as a "bridegroom," a word that is a synonym for joy, happiness, elation, gratitude.

There is an account preserved for us of that wedding feast at Cana, where Jesus was a welcome guest. Now, weddings are sometimes solemn, but they are seldom sad. Normally, they are occasions for joy. A new home is about to be set up, a new family life established; and if there be some ties broken by the new relationship, there are also additional ties taken on, and two families find a unity of hopes and dreams and aspirations for the wedded couple. We have a right, therefore, to think of Jesus as entering into festive affairs and enjoying them to the fullest.

John the Baptist was a great man. No doubt of that. But that sturdy reformer never suggests gladness or joy. Jesus paid him tribute, the highest tribute he ever paid a contemporary; but he drew a deep distinction between himself and the Baptist. John and his people Jesus likened to children playing at funerals, while he likened himself and his circle to children playing at the happier game of marriages. The Baptist belonged to an old dispensation wherein sternness and severity were emphasized. Jesus ushered in a new era, where the standards were higher and the spirit was that of abounding joy, radiant faith. Am I mistaken here? Read again the Gospel narratives and decide for yourself.

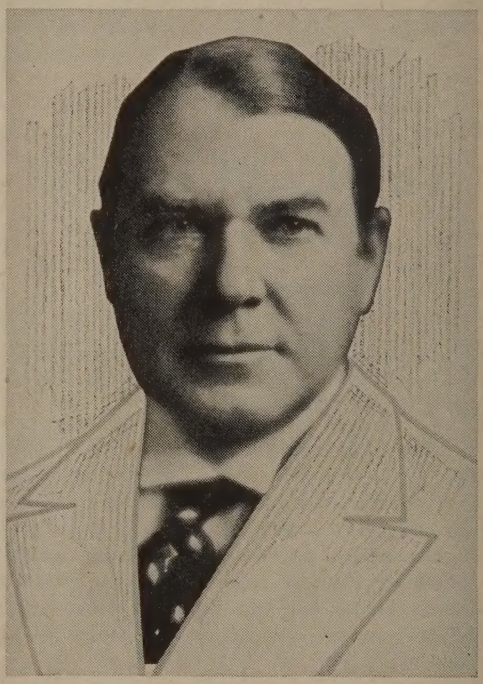
That Jesus entered into the joy of a wedding occasion is not surprising, nor is it unusual that he manifested this joyous spirit when he was surrounded by little children. We should expect this. But what shall we say when the idea of joy is associated with his cross? Behold him going to Calvary with a shining face and a high heart. The author of the Hebrew Epistle has that incredible phrase, "who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame." This is a joy that surpasses all understanding, though it can be studied and emulated with profit. If we cannot know it in fullness, we can at least know it in part. To do so would mean the restoration of much of that "lost radiance of Christianity." Ponder these words of Jesus: "These things have I spoken unto you that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full." These brave words can be read aright only in the light from the Lord's face.

There are not many happy faces among us. A visitor to our shores not a great while ago observed this fact and commented upon it. He said we were not a smiling people. Look about you in a crowd and observe the faces of the people. Some are utterly sad, some sullen, features drawn and haggard. There are lines in human faces that tell a story of disappointment, grief and envy. I have no disposition to criticize these telltale lines upon human faces, the outward signs of inward distress. Man's inhumanity to man is responsible for some of these caricatures of faces that rightly should be cheerful, radiant and happy. Surely one must be fortified within to be able to wear a "morning face" in the midst of darkness and despair. It was the light of an incredible gladness that was inspired from within which suffused the face of Jesus. He is our exemplar in this respect as in others. On the Mount of Transfiguration his face shone like the sun, a symbol of an inner light that nothing could quench.

III

There was also upon the face of Jesus the light of an arresting and uncontaminated inward peace.

I remember somewhere to have read a sermon in which the preacher said that the only thing that Jesus bequeathed to those about him when he died was the seamless garment for which the soldiers gambled at the foot of the cross. But surely that was the least of his legacy. A garment, even when it is of finest texture, is secondary to character, spirit, outlook and insight. The grandest legacy that Jesus left his disciples was his *peace*. In that Upper Room he thus spoke to his friends: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."



Edgar DeWitt Jones

What is the peace of Christ? Was it the peace which one finds in pastoral scenes, quiet countrysides, flower-embroidered mountain slopes? Was it the serenity of sunset and evening star? To be sure, there were lovely pastoral surroundings and restful vistas about Nazareth. To this day it is good to dream among those hills and valleys, to gaze on the shining stars and the "vitreous pour of the full moon." Yet, wherever there are human beings there is also struggle, conflict, controversy. Not necessarily, of course, cruel or debasing, but withal vexatious, annoying, often exasperating; the clash of human wills inevitable and universal.

Whatever may have been the nature of the years at Nazareth, there can be no gainsaying that the years of Jesus' public ministry, with the possible exception of the

first, were years of tumult, conflict and difficulty. He became a target of malicious criticism, the victim of conspiracy. He was as a storm-swept island lashed at all points by the fury of an encompassing hurricane. Yet inwardly he was at repose. He lived day by day in harmony with the Father's will, his conscience was untroubled, no memory of a misspent youth rose up to haunt him. No feeling of remorse darkened the mirror of his stainless life. Never did he say, "I was not always thus . . . remember not past years." Thus he moved amidst the fury of the storm about him, calm, courageous, knowing that "peace of God which passeth all understanding." The peace of Jesus was an inward experience before it had an outward expression. It was spiritual before it was physical.

You will observe that I use the word "uncontaminated" in referring to Jesus' peace. I carefully chose this word to express just what is in my mind. Take my own peace, for instance, my inward peace. It is sufficiently strong to carry me through experiences that disappoint and disconcert; but I cannot say that this peace which I know is uncontaminated. On the other hand, what is going on in this world of ours, war-scourged Europe—the suffering and the heartache—profoundly affects my thinking. Even though it does not overwhelm me it sometimes bewilders and shocks. I do not see how we can help being contaminated by the thoughts of wickedness that are within us and about us; we rise above them according to our faith, hope, love, perseverance, in thinking white. But in the case of Jesus, his peace rose on wings of a faith which carried it far about the shouting and the tumult, the darkness and despair. Yet his feet were firmly planted on the earth and he was touched to tears by the grief of Martha and Mary sorrowing for Lazarus. He was both idealist and realist—was Jesus of Nazareth.

Recall what he said to his disciples on a memorable day when they were cast down and about ready to give up: "These things I have said unto you that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." This is a striking statement; the overcoming life requires much. I do not see how we can know this peace of Christ if it is contaminated by envy, hate, utter selfishness. We need to study the strategy of his life as the story is unfolded in the Gospels. He saw beyond the now; he rested his case with the Eternal Father. It might help us to remember that however dark the day or long the night, daybreak and a new day are on their way. There will always be a resurrection. Short views of life are troublesome; long views are clarifying and helpful.

> Great captains, with their guns and drums,
> Disturb our judgment for the hour,
> But at last silence comes.

Yes, silence comes at last. The great guns fall silent and the task of building this broken world will confront us, and the question will be, How shall we rebuild? What pattern shall we follow? What design for successful living? Most important is the purpose, the spirit, the ideals. We shall never have peace without until we have peace within—his peace. The light on the Lord's face was that produced by an arresting and uncontaminated inward peace. He had deep wells from which to draw; springs of refreshing from the Eternal Spirit which never go dry.

IV

Likewise, there was the glow of a redemptive mission upon our Lord's face.

He was "sent of God," and never once did Jesus forget the mission which brought him to earth. "I am come to seek and to save the lost," was his battle-cry of freedom. Recall his parables of seeking and finding, as recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Luke's Gospel narrative. How strong, persuasive and beautiful are the stories of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, the Lost Boy!

Human beings without a sense of mission are a sorry lot, more to be pitied than condemned. They know not what they are missing yet are conscious of failure. They drift aimlessly with the tide, have no burden of lofty purpose, know no magnificent obsession. Restless, anxious, miserable, they exist but do not really live. How far removed are they in spirit from that gallant author of "An Airman's Letter" to his mother and delivered to her after his death! He wrote: "We are sent into this world to acquire a personality and a character to take with us that can never be taken from us. Those who just eat and sleep, prosper and procreate, are no better than animals."

Did that glow of redemptive purpose on our Lord's face ever appear to better advantage than when he set his face resolutely to go to Jerusalem with all that decision entailed—controversy bitter and prolonged, betrayal, mockery, scourging, and at last the cross and death amid a rabble cry? Little wonder that his disciples were amazed at that resolute shining face, determined to go where his enemies conspired and waited. And no wonder at all that in the Garden those sent to take him captive fell back astounded at the calm words, "I am he whom ye seek." For a holy cause he came into the world.

When men and women are possessed of a dream and a vision of a brave new world, their faces are apt to reflect the inward fires of high resolve. There is an outward glow because of an inward grace. Thus Stephen, on trial for his life before an unfriendly court: "And all that sat in the council, fastening their eyes on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." The light on Stephen's face was a beacon along the early Christian way.

That light on our Lord's face shone steadily with the glow of a redemptive ministry. It was as constant as the stars; as sure as the laws of seedtime and harvest. He must be about his Father's business.

> O Love divine, that stooped to share
> Our sharpest pang, our bitt'rest tear,
> On thee we cast each earth-born care,
> We smile at pain while thou art near.

Is that too strongly put? Not if read in the light that was on the Lord's face.

Mediators between God and man have a hard task

in the very nature of things. Moses suffered as he sought to mediate between Jehovah and the recreant Israelites. Job longed for a mediator or "umpire" between him and God. The ministry of reconciliation requires much. Look at Abraham interceding for the city of Sodom. His is the story of the first appearance in the Scriptures of an intercessor. And how persistently that grand patriarch entreated the Almighty for the stricken city! Ponder this Scripture: "And Abraham drew near and said, wilt Thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city, wilt Thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? . . . And the Lord said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then will I spare the city for their sakes."

Now Abraham was intensely concerned in saving the doomed city and he was not content to stop there, Would God spare the city if forty-five righteous were found in Sodom? He would. If forty, thirty, twenty righteous were found in Sodom, would the Almighty stay his hand? Yes, God would spare the city if twenty righteous were found there. And now Abraham makes his last stand as mediator between the Eternal and the doomed city. Humbly, yet determined, he states his case. If ten righteous are found in Sodom will God spare Sodom? And God said: "I will not destroy it for ten's sake."

Abraham stopped with ten. He stopped too soon. Suppose he had gone farther, had gone all the way and said: "O let not the Lord be angered; peradventure there be ten righteous found in Sodom, no not one, wilt Thou spare the city for my sake?" This is just what Jesus did. This is the long last mile he took so bravely and so self-forgetfully, willingly losing his life for others, giving his all with superb abandon. O, the light on our Lord's face as he gave the last full measure of devotion for a despairing world!

To reflect that light on our faces is to follow in his train.

> O Light, that followest all my way,
> I yield my flickering torch to Thee;
> My heart restores its borrowed ray,
> That in thy sunshine's blaze its day
> May brighter, fairer be.

WHILE the Christian gospel reveals a world which in its ground and in its fulfillment transcends history, it does not lift us out of history and its conflicts. The gospel which transcends all particular and contemporary social situations can be preached with power only by a church which takes its share of those burdens. The church cannot therefore evade the responsibility of seeking to establish peace and perfect justice.

J. H. OLDHAM.

SOMEONE suggested to Anton Lang, who took the part of Christ in the Passion Play, that the cross he carried might be lightened. He replied: "No, I cannot play the part unless I too carry the weight he did."

CHRISTIAN F. REISNER.

Luxuries a Christian Cannot Afford

BY R. DOUGLAS RAE

Go, sell all thou hast. Luke 18:22.

IN spite of present world chaos and its attendant mass hysteria, there persists at least one calm soul —that strange man of India. Part of the secret of this bespectacled, half-naked, shriveled little man is that, while actively participating in the practical struggles of his people, he has, after the order of St. Francis, denied himself not only the material luxuries of this world's comforts but those mental and emotional luxuries so common among contemporary men of power.

Mahatma Gandhi cares nothing for personal power; even ridicule and hatred leave him untouched. As Gilbert Murray suggests, "He is a dangerous and uncomfortable enemy because his body, which you can always conquer, gives you so little purchase on his soul." His simplicity of life, rather than being a showman's trick, is born of an inner conviction that, like another man of the East "who became poor," he too may share the sufferings of his people. He is a man who has, on the one hand, risen above the simple luxuries of money, and, on the other, above the more malignant luxuries of character.

Here in America, where under the pressure of factory production we are accustomed to watching our luxuries changing into necessities almost overnight, few of us possess such ascetic sensitivity to their acceptance. Strangely enough, the ill-clad years of depression have had little effect upon our expenditures for non-essentials. The luxury-lines over the last ten-year period have continued almost untouched. But over against these accepted comforts of a technical society, over against the luxuries of money, there exists another set of indulgences equally devastating and far more dangerous in their effect upon human character: luxuries a Christian *cannot afford.*

I

To begin with, there is a long list of minor luxuries of personality, emotional indulgences which one may maintain only at terrific expense. There is the luxury of a fit of temper, for example, that is a costly emotional debauch. There is the luxury of jealousy and of hatred, both of them extravagances of character.

The other day a woman in rather pinched circumstances, facing the problem of holding herself and her family together under terrific tensions, said this: "I can't afford to have a nervous breakdown." It was a luxury she couldn't pay for. If more of us could see the total picture of life, we would be quick to say: "I can't afford these emotional indulgences." "I can't afford the dubious and selfish pleasure of losing my temper, or the luxury of passing along personal scandal." "I can't afford to enjoy a fit of jealousy."

The Master of Life had severe words for a young man of wealth: "Go sell all that you have"—get rid of your luxuries. Some who are poor in goods that can be stamped with monetary symbols have surrounded themselves with personal luxuries of character equally as demoralizing as the prodigal spending of money. To enter the Kingdom of the Good one must learn to deny himself, not merely some of the selfish extravagances of wealth, but these equally expensive luxuries of emotion.

The man who indulges in a fit of temper when his will is crossed is no better than the rich young cad who spends inherited wealth in selfish ways. Jesus would remind him that it will be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a man to carry that luxury of anger into the Kingdom. That woman who enjoys the personal satisfactions of jealousy or the warm, malicious delights of a scandal is no better than her idle sister, whose lavish expenditures become notorious. To spend time satisfying the demands of these emotional sprees is to do something everyone has been tempted to do.

After all, it is much easier to feel than it is to think. Thinking through a situation calmly and reasonably is difficult business; an emotional debauch, on the other hand, is easy. Even though it signifies that the ordinary powers of mind and heart have not been strong enough to deal with the situation, it is a selfish indulgence—a luxury. To men and women given to these emotional expenditures, Jesus would say with equal sternness, "Go sell all that thou hast"—get rid of your emotional luxuries. You can't afford them.

II

Over against these minor extravagances of emotion there stands a list of major luxuries, peculiarly attractive to the Christian life. The first and one of the more familiar is the temptation to indulge in the luxury of social approval. That was the luxury which gave the Master of Life so much trouble in the wilderness: the desire to have the world bow down before him. To be sure, he didn't yield, but he must have known the emotional pull of the thing.

Outside the basic drives, there is perhaps no stronger motivating power in human nature than this desire for approval. We all stand in need of adequate social support. It is the oxygen we breathe. Above everything else, most of us want the approval of the group, its admiration and respect. We want to be well liked. The book publisher capitalizes on the fact that there are some of us who will sit up half the night to learn how to win social approval. But when social support is purchased at the expense of character, it becomes a luxury.

Here is one of the severe temptations of Christian living. The great struggle of the man of principle is not to keep from robbing a bank or disgracing his family; his great temptation is to please the crowd. That's the minister's problem: to yield to the demands of the popular mind. It is also one of the arch-enemies of the layman. "Everybody is doing it"—that is a strong argument for all of us, but think what attraction it has for those who are young. They too want social approval, want it at almost any price. Yet social approval, beyond the minimum demands of personal well-being, is a luxury. Isn't that what Jesus meant when he raised his familiar question: "What shall it profit a man if he gain [the approval of] the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Social approval is an expensive product indeed when character is in the balance.

And yet, even our churches succumb to it. The Lynds, in their book *Middletown in Transition,* have this to say about twentieth-century Christianity in

R. Douglas Rae

Middletown: "Religion," they wrote, "appeared to be an emotionally stabilizing agency." Which, according to the context of the chapter, is another way of saying that the churches of this average American city, though poorly attended, had the social approval of Middletown. That's the deadly trap into which the church falls: the luxury of enjoying popular favor. "The customer is always right" may be a good slogan for the department store, but it is a sad day when it becomes the shibboleth of the church. "Let's please the crowd" is not a battle-cry.

Being a Christian as Jesus would have interpreted it meant denying oneself the luxuries of that kind of popularity. He even went so far as to say that for the sake of the Cause one might have to brave even the disapproval of a father or a mother. And, as the apostle Paul discovered, the time might come when a man would stand alone in "Caesar's household," with nothing but the approval of his own soul. After all, the truths of Christianity do not depend on the number

of believers but upon a few devoted individuals bold enough to detach themselves from the immediate luxuries of approval.

III

Another indulgence to which the Christian is not infrequently given is the luxury of indifference. Mental laziness, like bodily laziness, is a luxury which exacts heavy tolls. The silent indifference of neutral unconcern not only undermines character, but eventually undercuts the very foundations of the Christian cause itself.

Two summers ago, just before the outbreak of the war, the International Association of Writers, whose roster includes such authors as Thomas Mann, Henry Seidel Canby, Edna St. Vincent Millay and many others, gathered in New York for a three-day congress. In the course of their deliberations Lin Yutang defined what he conceived to be the task of a writer, in the midst of a violence-intoxicated world. "My definition of writers as a class," he said, "is that they are a race of gifted babblers whose chief service to the state is their nuisance value." That may be a flippant definition of writers, but it is not an inaccurate description of the early Christians. From one end of the first century to the other these babblers who were called Christians made a nuisance of themselves. Indifference was not part of their strategy. If the book of Acts is a trustworthy account of their babbling, silent indifference was a luxury their pioneer souls didn't enjoy. They were gifted babblers with a nuisance value.

"To be seen and not heard" was the good advice my British parents had for children in the presence of elders. That may or may not be good psychology for growing children, but it is certainly bad advice for Christians. Christians ought to be both seen and heard.

Indifferent, silent self-complacency is a luxury, for, on the one hand, it eliminates the difficulties of forming an opinion and, on the other, by bolstering accepted prejudices it avoids unpleasantness. Christianity all too easily becomes a lecture course at which one enjoys the privileges of selfish silence and indifferent attention, never making up one's mind on the issue at hand. In reality, however, Christianity is a laboratory course in which the risks of experimentation and application are real; in which principles of action are accepted or rejected but never received with indifference. The great curse of our own church, for example, is not that the rolls are filled with backsliders, although we have our share, but that a large portion of the congregation enjoys this privilege of silence. The church suffers from blight, not because men of insight and wisdom are unaware of the problems it faces, but because so many are indifferent. They are like the central figures in H. G. Wells' *Croquet Players,* who said: "I don't care. The world may be going to pieces. The Stone Age may be returning . . . I'm sorry . . . I have other engagements. I am going to play croquet at half-past 12." Unconcerned, undisturbed, unthinking, silent indifference is a luxury. The Man of Galil was often silent, and on occasion unusually so, b he was never indifferent. That was a luxury Jes consistently denied himself.

IV

Another indulgence of character which makes itse attractive to the Christian life is the luxury of t closed mind. Mental intolerance has a long histo within the church. The old saying, "We are tattoo in our cradles with the beliefs of the tribe," has h ample ecclesiastical documentation. Intolerant dogm tism and bigotry have often enough sealed the Chri tian mind in littleness. The danger of the church not the threat of communism, but rather that those us within it will learn to play safe intellectually: liste ing only to what we want to hear; reading only t writers with whom we can agree; thinking tho thoughts which give the least trouble to ourselves a a minimum of offense to our friends. The danger the old danger of a closed mind, the danger that o will become a politician intellectually.

When the disciples gathered in the upper room f the last time, two very human questions arose amon them. They were the old questions of size, bigness a littleness. On the one hand the Scriptures state th they began to inquire among themselves who shou betray the Master. That is to say, who was the lea among them. On the other hand, Luke writes th there was a strife among them which was to be a counted the greatest. In other words, after three yea of Christian fellowship, there was a question of wh it had done to them. Had it made them big or littl What had it done to the world in which they live What had it done to their minds?

Jesus spoke of men whose religion had ushered the into the luxury of the little mind, closed and bigote men consumed with details of ceremony and traditio men whose minds never opened out upon new wa of thought and life. Mental exclusiveness, littleness mind, is a luxury that thrives on half-truth. After a the easiest thing in the world is to bolster one's po tion by closing the eyes, and believing only what o finds it easy to believe. The rule runs: never both to face the other man's point of view; label him a atheist, or at least an agnostic. Call him a conserv tive, or a liberal, and be done with it. Bigotry mind and heart, which so smoothly avoids the disco forts of open-mindedness, is not only a luxury but curse, of which the Christians have often been fou guilty. How easy it is to quote only the Scripture th proves the point! How simple to make Jesus say wh we want him to say! How comforting to hide in t mental blackout of half-truths! Prejudices, propagand and gossip thrive on just such mental laziness. T closed mind is an indulgence, a mental luxury whi no Christian can afford.

V

The last luxury I shall mention is a corollary to t closed mind, namely the closed life. Social exclusiv ness is an indulgence peculiar not only to Christia

but to men and women everywhere, a luxury whether it is the snobbery of wealth or the social hatred of poverty. It simplifies life not to bother with the man at the end of the street, or the women in the other club. To associate with only one's own kind is a luxury that both poor and rich find it easy enough to accept. But it is extravagant living in terms of character.

William Ewart Gladstone, great statesman that he was, was more Christian gentleman than astute politician. It was the custom of the Gladstones to bring into their home unfortunate women, then to spend and work with them until they were completely rehabilitated. For it, the prime minister was often ridiculed by his political opponents, but one of his biographers put it this way: "There was no worldly wisdom in it. But then what are people Christians for?" That pertinent question ought to be raised whenever and wherever Christians meet for worship. What are people Christians for, if not to be carried beyond themselves? The closed heart is a luxury, fully as detrimental to character as the bigotry of the closed mind. The crucial failures in life and society continue to happen right here in the narrowness of our human relations.

One need not be crowded into the tenement of a dead-end street in order to suffer the crippling effects of a limited horizon. There are other dead-end streets, streets we all live on, that never carry the eye beyond the needs of the family next door. To live like hermits, comfortable and complacent, enjoying the selfish security of a closed circle of friends, is to dwell on a dead-end street. The Christian way of life is an expanding experience that ruthlessly plays havoc with the warm coziness of our smug worlds, stretching the little streets on which we live into long boulevards of Christian selflessness. Social exclusiveness, personal or corporate snobbery, is a luxury a Christian cannot afford.

The conclusion of this whole matter of luxuries is this: that life in spite of everything becomes surfeited. In the final analysis the Christian way comes down to the question: What luxuries do I possess? What can I get along without? "If any man come after Me," said Jesus, "let him deny himself." Let him get along without these extravagances of character. Let him deny himself the little emotional luxuries of anger and hatred and jealousy. Let him have adequate social support, but let him learn to get along without popular approval. Does he want to enjoy the privileges of being indifferent or the mental securities of a closed mind? Let him deny himself. Does he want to live the life of the hermit limiting his associations to his "own kind"? Let him feel the expanding ruthless thrust of the Christian spirit.

Surely the Master of Life would remind him that "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a man to enter the kingdom with any such list of luxuries." Luxuries of character are extravagances the Christian cannot afford. The stern words of Jesus are pertinent here too: "Go, sell all that thou hast."

The Man Without the Hoe

By O. Walter Wagner

Hast not the potter power over the clay? Romans 9:21.

THE answer to the question of our text was once "Yes" but it is now "No." Once the potter owned the tools with which to shape out of one lump of clay a thing of beauty or out of another a thing of dishonor. This ancient and established proverb portraying the lordship of man over his work is without meaning in modern industry. The poetic and artistic portrayal of agrarian man no longer is an adequate description of the modern worker. Prophets, poets, artists and pastors must paint in tones of pathos and pain the plight of the millions of mass workers.

The man with the hoe is dead. Millet in his painting and Markham in his poem inscribed upon the mind of humanity the tragic epitaph of the suffering of the unsung toilers of the past. The man with the hoe stands as a symbol of the suffering servants of society. Let the comfortable, luxury-loving citizens of our materialistic age look long at the "thing that grieves not and never hopes, stolid and stern, a brother to the ox." Let him see the panorama of workers who lived, suffered and died in the evolution of American industry. Let him see the indentured servants chained together and led through the towns and villages of colonial America, offered for sale by the immigration brokers, planters, agents and shipowners. Let him see the black mass of slaves, possessed as property and worked according to the wishes of the owner; many of them whipped, hunted by bloodhounds and kept in irons. Let him see the millions of mill, mine and field workers rising in the dark of dawn, toiling through the heat of day, returning in the dusk of night—men who made America great. Let him praise God, for "the man with the hoe" is dead.

NEW MAN, NEW MASTERS

Industrial America has a new man. He is the man without the hoe. His name is legion—"the industrial slave," "the forgotten man," "the modern robot," "the machine atom." New artists, poets, prophets and pastors are needed to portray the man without the hoe. Allan Thomas, Michigan artist, in his chancel painting "Savior of the World" has pictured the laborer with his chin up, his hoe above his shoulder, his ear to the Master's voice who stands in blessing over this new son of the soil. Critics like this brave, new man with chin up better than Millet's "thing that grieves not and that never hopes, stolid and stern, a brother to the ox"—but is it realistic? Is the lot of the American worker substantially better? Is he given his rightful power, prestige and pay?

The astute critic will observe that modern man doesn't own a hoe and his observation is correct. Once the laborer owned his tools, ran his shop and had a

voice in his affairs. Today he is a man dispossessed of all but his hands. The machines, the factories and the management are his new masters. God made man in his own image, in his own image made he him to have pride in the work of his hands. Once man made a shoe and put his very being into it; once he made a garden and plucked the fruits thereof. Today he merely feeds machines. He monotonously screws the same nut on the same bolt, tightens the identical wheels to the identical chassis, lifts the same part to the same frame, amid the deadening noise of swift-moving belts, the grind of greedy machinery, the roar of quick-drying ovens. He no longer creates. He no longer plants. He no longer reaps a harvest. The machine is his master. Let the luxury-loving citizen of our materialistic age look long upon the man *without* the hoe.

HUMAN FLESH IS CHEAP!

What a pathetic thing is the modern industrial man without a hoe! Look long and you will see that he doesn't have a head. God created him as a son with possibilities for leadership, artistic creation and brotherly relations. God made man to work his best when he converses, controls and creates. But the modern industrial system clamps down on conversation, initiative and individuality. Sheepish obedience to efficiency, speed, production are demanded. Modern man is a number—a mechanical number that works best when it keeps perfect rhythm with a conveyor. Modern management that creates these robots admits thereby that less head and more brawn makes the most profit.

Studdert-Kennedy, speaking of the tyranny of Roman power in the first Christian century, says: "For those were crude and cruel days, and human flesh was cheap." Those days are not past. Statistics of industry's human waste indicate that the modern industrial system treats the common worker as though he had no worth.

During the ten years ending January 1, 1938, 150,000 laborers lost their lives in the wheels of industry that turn out our vaunted conveniences and the mechanical contraptions of our thing-minded age. We set aside national holidays to honor the war dead but we do not even print the casualty list of the unsung heroes of the work-a-day world. America has lost more sons in industrial accidents than in all her wars. These are civil and cultural days, but human flesh is cheap. America has twice the number of industrial deaths of any other nation in the world. Written in blood-red letters across her industrial belt are the words, "The Speed-Up." More and more work is required with less and less rest and protection. Production must continue to climb the statistical ladder. The line on the profit chart must go up even if thousands of lives are laid down on the altar of mass production. Occupational diseases due to lack of ventilation, cleanliness and sanitation yearly lay low hundreds of thousands of our toilers; 380,000,000 work days a year are lost through illness of the worker. Industrial fatigue is a new scourge silently but unmistakably enervating modern man.

No nation can look with complacency upon this consistent destruction of human personality and human power. No Christian dare fail to relate these facts of the human struggle now waged between capital and labor to his conception of the Kingdom of God. No industrialist is singly to blame for the tragic plight of the modern worker and no worker is singly able to help himself. All Christendom stands in judgment before the tragic figure of the man without a hoe and every Christian bears the responsibiilty of restoring dignity to toil.

In this contemporary struggle the danger is that Christians will dissipate their attitudes in words and thus render themselves unfit servants of the mass of laborers who make life possible for modern man. The man without the hoe needs his hoe. The man treated as a robot covets respect for his soul and body. The industrial worker is helpless without the organization of labor. The Christian church that long ago, through papal encyclical and social pronouncement, gave voice to the right of labor to organize for collective bargaining, now needs to implement its ideas and put into action its commitments. The church needs a program of minimum Christian action. Any program of specific action is always subject to the vicissitudes of time and many are the Christians who therefore hesitate to act lest their action be not relative to the need. The danger of relevance is often inaction, and the tragedy of inaction is the continuance of sin and suffering.

ESSENTIAL SOCIAL IMPERATIVES

The accomplishment of the church's social pronouncement will remain dependent on the perspective that the Christian holds of the labor movement. Thus the first essential social imperative for the Christian is a knowledge of history. The history of labor's struggle is marked by milestones of great social conflicts. Let modern man look back at the gory Haymarket riot of 1893 if he would see the hard road by which labor fought for the right of an eight-hour day. Let him look at the U. S. steel strike of 1919 if he would learn the cost in human life paid by the workers for the gain of greater wages and shorter hours. Would the modern Christian give intelligent support to labor, let him read the record of the organization of the Congress of Industrial Organization. Let him see the slaughter of human life in the little Steel Strike of south Chicago or the use of Vigilantes against the factory workers in Monroe, Michigan.

Any honest reading of the history of labor's struggle will show two forces pitted against each other. On the one hand will be the industrial lords, organized as corporations, manufacturers' associations and employers' clubs. This is the group which in American industry controls the wealth; lobbies the legislatures into anti-labor legislation; controls the press; engages in spy systems; and appeals to public prejudice through name calling and the "red" scare. Pitted against this group are the massed workers. All they have left is their collective bargaining rights. Bereft of their tools, dispossessed of any stake in the industry, lacking any

ice in the affairs of the factory, their only strength the fellowship of their fellow men. Long ago Lincoln id that "without labor there could be no capital, erefore labor has priority rights in any industry." ne needs the perspective of history as the first social perative.

The modern mass worker in industry will not re- ver his tools, his dignity or his fair share of the uits of his toil until his fellow citizens realize their mplete dependence upon him. The worker's right- l place awaits the Christian's social awakening.

When the Christian breaks bread, let him see the ng train of toilers who daily bring food to his

O. Walter Wagner

ble; the migrant worker who drags his hungry family ross the continent to harvest the early fruit and the te potatoes; the teamsters and the truckers who cart e food to the market; the trainmen who hurry it into e city—and back of the trainmen the mechanics in ops and factories producing and maintaining the eans of transportation; let him see the clerks and sboys, the shopkeepers and salespeople, the cooks and e maids who transform grain and milk into bread and tter. A new day will dawn for the worker when e Christian senses his communion with the body of bor in the breaking of bread.

The clothes that we wear come to us off the backs f the amalgamated clothing workers of the world; e autos we drive are forged out of the sinew and veat of the united auto workers of the world; the coal at heats our homes is brought to us out of the bowels f the earth on the backs of the united mine workers f the world. Food, clothes and shelter are ours be- ause millions of hands have served us and without their labors we would perish. Modern urban industrial life is possible only because the man without the hoe offers his hands.

OUR KIND OF FOLK

His dignity, his tools, his profit await our social awakening. Let the Christian see that it is our brother who is buried in Pietri De Donato's *Christ In Concrete;* our pastor who is slugged as he defends the Joads in Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath;* our little sister who sells her soul for skates in Margaret Gelhorn's *The Trouble I've Seen;* our kind of folk who make up the workers of the world. They are the flesh of our flesh and the blood of our blood. They are the heart of our daily life. Yes, they are the head and the heart and the arm of our common life but are treated by comfortable Christians as though they were merely rhythmic robots, harnessed to a conveyer that brings every necessity and many luxuries into the laps of the comfortable. The second crucial social imperative for the Christian is the divine insight to call the right people "brother."

The millions of workers who are outside of the fellowship of the Christian church are there primarily because only in the organization of labor have they been called "brothers." By their own efforts and organization they have secured shorter hours, better wages and safer and more sanitary working conditions. In their struggles the church has often played an ignoble part. While the industrial lords, like the Pharaohs of Egypt, demanded more and more speed and production with less and less voice in the process of production, the church chided the laborer for organizing to resist this pressure, but blessed the men who long since were organized into corporations and associations, to apply the pressure.

CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ACTION

On the one hand, the Christian needs the social insight to call his fellow workers "brother" and on the other hand he needs the moral conviction to call his brother "sinner"; but lest he fall into the temptation of giving lip service to the laborer and a tongue lashing to the employer, let him through the perspective of history and the compulsion of brotherhood render his judgment and offer his allegiance.

The unpardonable sin is for the Christian to live in the midst of plenty, accept all the benefits of modern industrial life and to bear none of the burdens of the suffering servants of society. His continuing sin is that of substituting social pronouncements for Christian social action. When the Christian pastor is as much at home at a labor meeting as he is at the noonday club dinner; when the prominent churchman defends with equal zeal the sanctity of our American institutions and the cause of the unskilled workers; when the official boards of the church are as eager for labor representatives as they are for professional men; when the Christian church is again a fellowship of the entire community—then, and only then, will the mass worker in industry again be as the potter with power over the clay. He will have his hoe and his head and his heart.

What Is God Doing Now?

By Clarence W. Kemper

THE pagan taunt of the centuries comes home to us now. How shall the faithful answer this challenge? There are reflected the gleeful satisfaction of the pagans and the despair of the faithful. This question was asked by those who harassed and carried captive the Hebrew people of Old Testament times. It reflects a combination of triumph over them, disdain for their God, and rejoicing in the power of their might over a people who had put their trust in spiritual values.

Much the same is the situation today. Where now is the plighted word, the covenants, of yesterday? Where is our trust in a world community? Where is the framework of human society built up over the past thousand years? Where is the God of the nations which one after another have become subject to a totalitarian power? Call over the list of small nations of Europe. Might not a great company wonder where God is now and what he is doing? Might not the modern persecutors ask the old question, "Where is thy God?"

GOD AND HUMANITY

Let us re-examine the place of God in human life. Is it not true that many of the faithful want a God who will accommodate himself to us and our world? We want a non-interfering God in the realm of the physical world. We want gravitation, tides, seasons, sunrise and sunsets. We have learned to know that kind of world. It can be depended upon. We put our feet down on solid ground. But are there not times when in life and personal affairs we do want an interfering God? We go our ways oblivious of the laws of character and spirit until consequences come upon us that we do not want, then we are tempted to ask God to see that we escape the consequences. But God must be consistent with himself both in the physical world and in man's personal living. The laws of life, love and truth are as unalterable as those of the earth, and sea and the air. Our God is ever a consistent God.

Hence the enrichment of human personality, the growth in the graces of respect, consideration, good will, love and understanding of God in human living are among the most fundamental of all considerations today. "The Green Pastures," famous Negro classic, tells of a God who will "rare back and pass a miracle" for our deliverance. Quaint as is this picture it is not uncommon among sophisticated and ultra-modern believers in God. It is a lingering hope with us when we are walled in. But the Christian God has always been a working God, hitherto and now. Creative ever, he toils with his children up new Calvaries, accepting with them the consequences of their folly. Through it all, however, he is always trying to get them to see and feel the place of God in human history. It was that very faith in a God working through human relatio sometimes even to our hurt, that animated the gr Isaiah in the eighth century before Christ. Hear words: "O Assyrian, rod of my avenger, and staff my fury! . . . O people of mine, be not afraid of Assy . . . for in a very little while my fury shall cease a my anger shall come to an end." Here is a picture God at work in the processes of history, sometimes our hurt and sometimes to our healing.

LIGHT IS NEAR, SO IS GOD

God is nearer than we think, suggests Theod Soares. He makes some helpful reminders for days. "Let there be light" flashes out of the beginni of our Bible. "God is light" is the word that co out of our New Testament. "If we walk in the li we have fellowship one with another" states the Ch tian relationship. Our day is characterized by fe The President has told us that we need fear but thing and that is fear. We know what it is to aw in the dead of night captured by fears of many ki which at the next noonday are all gone. There is suggestion of God as light driving away man's fe and making him to walk the world unafraid. Ligh near, so is God.

Ours is a world throbbing with energy. We, inhabitants, never rest. The earth spins and gravi tion pulls, while blood courses its way through bodies and we are ever in action save for sufficie sleep to rebuild our energies. Out of the Bible co a word which sounds strangely like what we s "In him all things live and move and have th being." This universal and ever active energy remi us of a God resident and active in all life. Yes, "G is nearer than we think."

THE SOLID ROCK TO BE TRUSTED

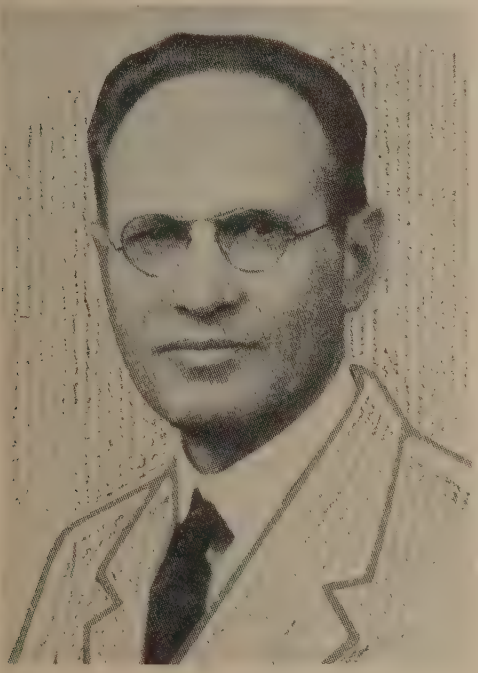
We are reminded of the presence and power a beneficence of God in the very uniformity and tru worthiness of his world. Go to Boulder Dam a let it speak. It said to the engineers: "My h shoulders of granite have stood here for centur They are to be trusted. Build your giant walls fo reservoir here and I will support Mead lake which v in turn bless a great arid region for generations." nation trusted it and is today blessed by it. M promises but he does not always deliver. Our wo is just now cursed by strutting dictators who h promised much. But to deliver is another thing. Al in their attempts to deliver they have made many m lions suffer. Go back to the words of Jesus: "T truth shall make men free." Here we have solid r and a reminder of the presence of God in the proces of physical and personal life. Yes, Dr. Soares, God nearer than we think.

Our problem is to get the quality of God so grained in human living that we can trust it as trust the mountains, seas and seasons. This very p sibility of Godlikeness is so alluring and so dangero Freedom, truth and love are like that—either the b things in life or terrible when perverted. "The st which the builders rejected, the same is become

ad of the corner. He that falleth on that stone shall broken; but upon whomsoever that stone shall fall will grind him to powder." "O Assyrian, rod of my enger," said Isaiah. Is it that Hitler and his kind ay that part today? At least it humbles us to reflect it.

PUTTING WRONG THINGS RIGHT

Where is our good old teaching about conscience? does not seem to thrive well in our blasé generation. ynicism is not akin to God. When men are moved the mood of "What's the use?" man is not very portant, duty is shoved off and God is not very



CLARENCE W. KEMPER

eal. I heard of a boy who attended a church school vhere he heard the story of Onesimus. One remark tuck in his memory: "If there is anything wrong it as got to be put right." When he went home his par- nts were surprised that he did not hurry to lunch. He explained that he had to hunt up Ed and give him is bicycle bell. Something had been awakening within im—"If there is anything wrong it has got to be ut right." He had found the urgency of God moving n a common incident such as that of the bicycle bell.

"It has got to be put right"—that might well sound ut like a great overtone above the noise and strife f our generation which has been more concerned with getting things rather than how they were gotten. God as had some concern here, too, about which we had forgotten. Now that the bitter fruit of the conse- quences have come, we wonder where God is. "He is closer than we think."

A faithless world is an agnostic world. Someone remarked that education which is not religious is agnostic. We are so hemmed in now that we are all seeking afresh some spiritual interpretation of life. That is what God wanted us to do about life before we were hemmed in. "Jehovah's portion is his people," declares the sacred word. Then the people's portion should be Jehovah, for it is a two-day thoroughfare. "The Eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."

> Fear not thou, for I am with thee;
> Be not dismayed, for I am thy God;
> I will strengthen thee;
> Yea I will help thee,
> Yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

Good news that yet! "This commandment which I command thee this day is not too wonderful for thee; neither is it afar off," said the old prophet.

MEN MUST BRING IN THE KINGDOM

In a sense the common man is the marvel of the ages. How willing and patient he has been in enduring hardships, facing losses, sufferings and even death! How much he has been promised and how poorly the promises have often been fulfilled! Too often that fine loyalty and allegiance has been turned to the lower levels of antipathy and destruction. When will the plain man turn those powers of his into neighborliness, community living, mutual help, sharing life, building cities, rescuing millions from crushing poverty? Then he and his brothers, working with God, will redeem the earth. Then every man shall sit under his own vine and fig tree and none shall make him afraid. Then shall the vision of Jerusalem upon the mountains be realized. Then shall the will of God be done on earth as it is in heaven. Then shall the kingdoms of this world become the Kingdom of our Lord and his Christ.

There are the imperishables, and for them God ever works and man at his best works with him. God still lives though dictators mar the face of the earth and common man for the time being suffers many indignities. Truth is eternal; while that which is false may flourish for a day, it is of the earth earthy. Right will ultimately prevail. Today we may well sing: "This is my Father's world, O let me ne'er forget that though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet."

BE OF GOOD CHEER!

Right will ultimately prevail. "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world," said Jesus as he stood in the dim light before going to his cross. Someone has remarked that in the last 2,500 years there have been 2,517 wars; twenty-seven wars since the armistice of 1918! But the prophet's dream will not die: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruninghooks." God keeps on creating this holy impulse and others akin to it.

We cannot do better than to remind ourselves that God is everywhere where the cause of his creatures is under consideration. To challenge his children is to

challenge him. He is hurt by every hurt to them. Wherever they dream of a better world, a fairer order and social structure more characterized by justice and good will, there he is and is at work, initiating, empowering and cooperating to these holy ends.

Nothing in life has more of lure and adventure in it than working with such a God. True, low spiritual values may temporarily be victorious. It is discouraging that the right does not always win. Surely God must be very patient to wait and not force the issue. It is a poor faith men lose when the tide seems against goodness. Robust faith, more akin to God, goes forward never doubting beauty, goodness and truth; and it will win. Hear that Hebrew youth as he expressed this dauntless faith: "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us, and he will deliver us. But if not be it known unto thee that we will not serve thy gods nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

GOD HAS LED, AND LEADS

Our God is marching on and is always winning new victories. Who knows but that in these dark hours for humanity around the world God has some great movements afoot which will advance the interests and well-being of his creatures more than in any similar period in the history of the world?

The name of John Hampden is a symbol of liberty in British history. He died some three hundred years ago. At the funeral service the minister read from the 90th Psalm: "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations." After the service, as the soldiers were returning, they were said to have made the valley ring with the singing of the 43rd Psalm: "O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead me; let them bring me unto Thy holy hill." At the same time, the backward and the forward look. One is a testimonial that God has been at work in our affairs through all our yesterdays, while the other is a prayer song for all the future. We do not believe God going to quit working for us and with us.

After the kings and princes have passed the prophe come on the scene, and in the long run the prophe will have the say:

> The tumult and the shouting dies,
> The captains and the kings depart:
> Still stands thine ancient sacrifice,
> An humble and a contrite heart.

"It is God that worketh in you both to will and to d his pleasure." "Whatever is born of God overcomet the world."

Once God lived completely in the "strong Son o God" who went to his cross—the unique thing in h life.

Like the tide that lifts the sea on its mighty shou ders, God is in human life. Like the law of gravitatio holding everything in its place, so God is drawing u unto himself. "In him all things stand together," shouted the great apostle. Where is God and what i he doing? He is in the thick of things struggling t bring order out of chaos; striving to bring light out o darkness, justice out of injustice, brotherliness out o unbrotherliness. When the world was young ther came the divine voice to Cain speaking a deathles truth: "If thou doest well shalt not thou be accepted and if thou doest ill, sin croucheth at the door."

IT MAY BE that only the obedient can hear the voic of God from the past, but I suspect that the courageou help God reveal himself in the present. There is n formula which anyone can give us which will save u from the necessity of making a great adventure. W can only seek the help of a God who expects men t adventure and who reveals himself at the point o moral discovery on the part of man.

ARTHUR E. HOLT.

A Pastoral Prayer

BY OSWALD W. S. MCCALL

O THOU that hauntest man with hints of joy beyond all our rejoicing, of whom the stars in their beauty sing together, who art the ineffable Spirit of flowers, of green hills and listening valleys, of mystic, wide spreading plains, and little children's laughter; O Joy unutterable and full of glory, we meet Thee everywhere and miss Thee, and find Thee everywhere and lose Thee, and have no blessedness except as we know Thee. Behold us again at the palace gates, seeking the King in His beauty!

Here we hesitate upon Thy threshold, O God most High, most Holy, thou Infinite Spirit before whose light men are but as motes in the sun: here behold us pausing, most merciful Father, as those who remove their shoes ere treading upon holy ground. Have pity, Lord! Wash us in Thy pure life and take the stains away from us. Strike our palsied spirits through with sudden vigor, and lead us here into Thy serene calm o great places.

O God, Thou calmness above our wicked, franti ways, Thou one abiding and unfailing light: from al delays of our hopes, and dismays of our hearts, fron all terrors of the unknown, and of darkness, and o devils, we lift our hearts to Thee. To Thee we cr for one clear vision of power everlasting and purpos all prevailing. Here bind us to Thy purpose, and arn us with Thy power, in all the consecration of Christ

Great God and Father of mankind, while the worl without us lies deep in the shadow of death, stir an waken all our world within with great assurance tha Thou livest still, and ever livest, and that we shall liv also, and our friends and our children, and all thing shall live, according as Thou art heeded, trusted, fol lowed through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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In the JANUARY Issue

will appear sermons by the six ministers who have been named by a cross-section vote of Pulpit readers as the *most effective* preachers in America today.

The FEBRUARY issue will be a Young Ministers' Number. The sermons in that issue will be selected from those submitted by ministers who have been named by the heads of seminaries as the most successful preachers and pastors who have gone out from the seminaries within the past five years.

A NEW FORMAT

has been planned for The Christian Century Pulpit beginning with the JANUARY issue. You will like it.

Very early in 1942 will appear a number of new features for the Pulpit, including a department of Outline Sermons and a Correspondence Page. Watch for further announcements in the JANUARY issue.

Keep Your PULPIT coming!

Sources of Power In Preaching

By Gaius Glenn Atkins

A PSALMIST once prayed—and wisely—to be delivered from presumptuous sins. It is our loss that he did not catalogue the more glaring, though space doubtless forbade it. If he had, he might have warned writers against the sin of presumptuous titles which are commonly outward and evident signs of unprecise thinking and a too ambitious spirit. This title —"Sources of Power in Preaching"— is a confessedly presumptuous one, but there is urgency behind it, for unless preachers have some sufficiency of light and leading about it, their vocation is in peril.

The trouble, of course, is in what one might call its fourth dimension; in those qualities of the delivered sermon which escape analysis, atmospheres, the power to evoke emotional response and, in an untranslatable word, the "rapport" between a speaker and his audience, which is the supreme and elusive element in the almost magical power of effective public speech. About such things as these there can be no general agreement—which makes the title presumptuous.

● *A Sermon's Content and Relevance of Content*

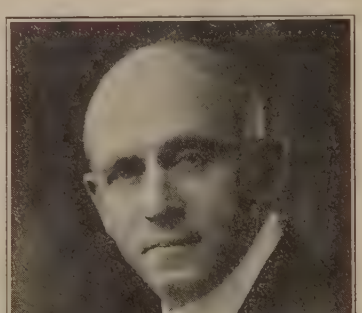
Fundamentally, the power of any written or spoken word is in what it says, in its content, and this, being self-evident, needs only to be said. So far as preaching goes, written and published sermons furnish the best illustrations. Any number of things may mask the lack of content in a sermon—or any public speech—while one is listening to it, but when only the thing said is left in the wealth or poverty of it, the inexorable judgment of content has the last word. Sermons live through what they say or have said. But always in relation.

The first source of power in preaching is content; the second is the relevance of the content. A sermon as full of good matter as an egg is full of meat may be a total loss if what it says is not relevant to some need or interest, felt or unfelt, then and there in the congregation. I do not know how sufficiently to develop this. The needs are so various.

They may be the perplexities, questings, happinesses or sorrows of a single pew. They may be the shared seekings of a congregation bringing their communal life to church, wanting what they cannot themselves put into words, what the preacher must put into words for them, because he knows and has the words. They may be the travail of an epoch whose inarticulate prayer is: "Send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead us." No preacher is equal to all this, but the power of his preaching is in its faculty to meet living needs.

● *Mutuality Between Preacher and Congregation*

The third source of power in preaching is the community of this sense of need between the preacher and the congregation. Cynical psychologists say that all preachers preach to themselves—which may and indeed ought to be true. (I could usually in teaching sense the difficulties of our students as well as their controlling interests from the lines their sermons took). But it is, unhappily, possible for a preacher to be quite intensely occupied with what has little relation to the needs, felt or unfelt, of his congregation. He may preach his heart out and leave them cold.



Gaius Glenn Atkins

St. Paul once used a phrase about whose translation no two scholars agree. It might be, in the vernacular, "I am out to get the thing that has got me;" which is about what every preacher tries to do in his sermons. When he and his congregation share that consuming enterprise together, the unessential disappears, the spoken becomes the living word and a plain meetinghouse the Shekinah. But it must be *together*.

● *The 'Message' Quality Vitally Important*

Since both initiative and authority belong of right and necessity to the pulpit, preaching through its content, its relevancy and its community becomes a *message*—an inherited phrase whose pietism ought never to obscure its significance.

The fourth source of power in preaching is its "message" quality. It begins to be something "given," an accent of the Holy Ghost, a modulation of the timeless gospel. I think Horton's Lyman Beecher Lectures which, with the audacity of genius, he called *Verbum Dei,* afford the best examination ever made of the conditions under which a sermon may really become the word of God and the preacher, though he dare not say it, become the comrade of the prophets who dared to say, "thus saith the Lord."

All the right intensities of preaching are in its message qualities. Then the message, possessing the preacher, captures the congregation, not for the preacher's pride, but for his cause and his gospel. It is the issue of his wisdoms and his sensitivenesses. It is timed to the occasion and timing is of the essence of any message. It is alive with sympathies and understandings, vibrant with an emotion which the message itself evokes and controls. (Message must always lead emotion—never the contrary.) Earnestness is message-pressure, true unction is the anointing of the preacher by the message. (Spurious unction is using the message to anoint the preacher.) Self-consciousness disappears and any sermon thus conceived and given cannot fail in its peak movements to rise to noble heights.

● *Organization of the Sermon*

All the techniques of homiletics are subordinate to these general controls, but because they deal with so vital an affair, they are themselves vital. On this second level—so to speak—organization comes first. A badly organized sermon may be "all on fire" and "miss fire" at the same time. No need to argue that. A confused preacher who cannot see the end from the beginning, loses his hearers as he loses himself. The interest content of a sermon depends almost as much upon its movement as upon its relevance and its community. When it ceases to move, the congregation turn to their own affairs. Oliver Wendell Holmes' illustration of the crow and the king-bird is quite to the point. There are chapters enough about organization in any book on preaching. Essentially organization and development are one. Good organization is the native structure of the thing said; development is organization on the march. The "points" are always there

waiting if only one can discover the best line of development.

This is one of the reasons why a preacher can leave his "notes" in the study. He will not need to remember his sermon. He can think it through again, creatively, then and there. When a sermon is structurally right, the preacher will find his next point when the time comes. Organization is also, of course, the way of an orderly mind in arrangement and development; subject matter and mind going on together. The controls are fascinatingly various. Textual development is controlled by the movement of the text, expository development by the passage, argumentative development takes one line, analogy preaching another and so on and on. (Textual-topical preaching needs constantly to be watched. If the text and topic are not perfectly germane, the topic takes one line and the text another. Result? Well, pretty much all of us know that unhappy result.)

● *Artistry in Sermon Construction*

Essentially there are three main movements in any sermon: getting in, getting on and getting out. The lost motion is most likely to be in getting in. The introduction is meant to get the preacher, the congregation and the text together and ready to start as soon and deftly as may be. The preacher should be ready to go before he begins. Too much introduction is the preacher trying to get himself off the ground. Bad organization short-circuits the conclusion and having proposed or urged the vital, leaves out the supreme consideration. How? How? How?

Then there are the right words, if only one can find them—right in meaning, in simplicity, in music and if possible in unexpectedness and in rhythmic succession. Here the preacher begins to be the artist, his words are his brush strokes, his sentences begin to be his lines and their arrangement his composition. Light and color come with them. A good sermon, like a good painting, is complete in its own frame and as in the case of the artist, what the preacher does with his empty spaces is a test of his artistry.

● *Overtones an Essential of Effective Preaching*

All this in its entirety becomes style, which is the personal distinction (that is, what distinguishes him from every other preacher) of a preacher in his matured and confluent action of body, mind and spirit, since style, it has long been maintained, is just the man in action. There are profound—almost organic—correspondences between content, form and delivery-expression. Style is the result of the discipline of every sermonic faculty and the sermonizer besides—an invaluable servant, an impossible master. Since another article of this series has dealt with delivery in its root meanings, I am more than willing to leave it to Dr. Hewitt. For it is in "Getting the Message Across" that all the sources of power in preaching become unified, evident and ardent, the congregation acknowledges what it does not or cannot analyze and the preacher becomes the channel of something whose source is beyond and above him.

Musicians make much of "overtones." The physicist has an explanation of them. They are the "upper partials," the secondary vibrations carried, perhaps, like waves on a river by the fundamental tones. But they do not belong to the physicist, they are the final perfection of a song or a symphony, music's true quality and color, the music the musician evokes.

Very greatly, therefore, the final source of power in preaching, never completely to be analyzed or agreed upon, is in a sermon's overtones. These evoke the felt silences which hush a congregation. They are rarely dominant for more than five to seven minutes in any sermon, in that interval gained, then lost, when all the sources of power are integrated and the preacher is their instrument.

But, oh, the discipline which combines to evoke them! If one seeks them purposefully they are never there. If one does his best with what he can control, they come of themselves—not always, for there must be also the contributing harmony of the preacher's spirit. But when they do come, he may very humbly say with Abt Vogler: "God has a few of us whom He whispers in the ear"—and the congregation know it.

● *Good Sermons Provoke Right Moods*

There is no complete agreement among us as to what a sermon should do and therefore no homiletic equivalent of an "erg" to measure its power. One of our Auburn students supplied a definition of a sermon which should go into the textbooks: "A sermon is a public address which can end and ought to end in prayer." By that test the power of preaching is to turn the questing spirit to God. Equally, preaching in some of its noblest phases is an effective incentive to action. A great deal of outstanding preaching seems to issue primarily only in illumination and interpretation. This, I think, with proper qualifications, was the secret of Martineau's and Brooks' excellence.

If one may venture a too easy alliteration, the power of preaching is in the moods it evokes—and a mood is no superficial thing; in the minds it helps to inform and create; in the motives it releases and empowers; and, finally, beyond any alliteration, in the obedient responses it wins to the way and truth and life of Jesus Christ.

There has never been in Christianity and is not now anything completely to take its place. In any period of crisis or uncertainty the spoken word always takes on a new significance. Witness the indispensable function of the spoken word in every region of our desperately disordered communal life. When all other voices are multiplied, why should the need and function of the spoken gospel be doubted? The timeless power of preaching is in its gospel.

Practicing the Rules of Life's Road

MAY I tell you one reason why we have nervous breakdowns? There are, I know, many other reasons, but this is one. It can be learned from the wisdom of Dr. J. A. Hadfield. "We do not take the jump when the time comes to jump." Life as we are taught today is not like a hill, slowly rising and then slowly descending; we do not mount the hill of life nor do we descend it. Life is rather a journey with violent crises—jumps at certain intervals, jumps to another plane—rebirths, if you like. And the man who, when he comes to the crisis, ignores it and lives as if he were still in the earlier stage, is liable to a nervous breakdown. He does not keep the rules of the road, which is a broken road.

Or in other words, the man of fifty who preserves the idea that he is still a boy and keeps the outward demeanor and all the tricks of a boy, is likely to have a serious smash. Peter Pans all break down in health. They are the scene of forces divided one against another. And as Jesus said, "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

The only way of life for a man when he is fifty is to live as a man of fifty. It would be desperately foolish for him at that age to play football; it is equally foolish for him in his intellectual and spiritual outlook to ignore the years and to pretend to be even forty. As a matter of fact, there is a crisis at such a time, which we ignore at our peril.

EDWARD SHILLITO.

God have mercy on the man who is a slave to logic and consistency.

Silence is not always golden: sometimes it is a confession.

Blessed is the man who can enjoy a banquet even when he is not at the head table.

The only gifts we ever give are those we give when we do not expect to receive anything in return.

ROY L. SMITH.

• WHO'S WHO in THIS ISSUE •

HAVING received degrees at Northwestern University and Garrett Biblical Institute, Rev. IVER M. JOHNSON pursued postgraduate work with Dr. Eucken at the University of Jena, also at the University of Chicago. He has just come from a nine-year pastorate at Grace Methodist Church, Decatur, Ill., to succeed Rev. John Thompson as minister of First Methodist Church (Chicago Temple), Chicago.

A graduate of Dakota Wesleyan and Drew Universities, Rev. EVERETT W. PALMER has for the past seven years ministered at Trinity Methodist Church, Highland Park, N. J.

Rev. EDGAR DEWITT JONES *has* been minister of Central Woodward Christian Church, Detroit, Mich., for more than 20 years. He has held many posts of responsibility in his own communion and was president of the Federal Council of Churches in 1937-38.

Rev. W. DOUGLAS RAE *received his* B.D. at Yale Divinity School and is now in his first pastorate, First Baptist Church, Bloomington, Ind., seat of Indiana University.

Beginning his pastoral service at First Evangelical Church, Gary, Ind., Rev. O. WALTER WAGNER is now pastor of St. John's Evangelical and Reformed Church, Jackson, Mich. He received his theological education at Eden Seminary and the University of Chicago Divinity School. He has served as chairman of worship for the Council of Social Reconstruction of his denomination.

Rev. CLARENCE W. KEMPER *has been* minister of First Baptist Church, Denver, since 1934. Earlier pastorates were in Chicago, Cincinnati, Minneapolis, Lansing, Mich., and Charleston, W. Va. He has been prominent in the general work of his denomination.

Rev. OSWALD W. S. MCCALL *is min*ister of the New First Congregational Church, Chicago.

Dr. GAIUS GLENN ATKINS *was until his* retirement professor of homiletics and sociology at Auburn Theological Seminary.

TITLES AND TEXTS

'What was the most effective sermon you heard during the past year?'

GEORGE A. BUTTRICK, Madison Ave. Presbyterian, N. Y. "What Is Comfort?" II Cor. 1:4—"Who comforteth us in all our affliction, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any affliction, through the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." Preached in N. Y. (Sent by G. H. Gladhill, Southwest Harbor, Me.)

F. W. NORWOOD, St. Andrew's-Wesley, Vancouver, Can. "The Sigh of God." Mark 7:34— "and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened." Preached at Fifth Ave. Presbyterian, N. Y. (Sent by J. M. Baker, Danbury, Conn.)

H. D. MCKEEHAN, Abbey Church, Huntingdon, Pa. "The Oldtime Religion." I Thess. Exposition. Preached at Juniata College. (Sent by George Turnbaugh, Mannsville, Pa.)

JOHN A. MACKAY, Princeton Seminary. "The Communion of the Blood." I Cor. 10:16—"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ?" Preached at First Presbyterian, Hollywood, Cal. (Sent by J. W. Hutchinson, Bridgeton, N. J.)

WILL H. HOUGHTON, Moody Bible Institute. "The Glories of Christ." Col. 1. Exposition, Preached at Montrose Bible Conference. (Sent by H. F. Damon, Sayre, Pa.)

ANDREW BLACKWOOD, Princeton Seminary. "Heavenly Treasure in Earthen Vessels." II Cor. 4:7—"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves." Preached at Summit, N. J. (Sent by Norman Dunsmore, Shamokin, Pa.)

THEODORE F. ADAMS, First Baptist, Richmond, Va. "Old-Fashioned Christians." Rom. 12:2—"And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Preached in Louisville, Ky. (Sent by G. M. Ray, Glennville, Ga.)

HENRY H. CRANE, Central Methodist, Detroit, Mich. "Unconscious Sins." Prov. 4:23—"Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it come the issues of life." Preached at Detroit. (Sent by A. R. Whitmore, Detroit, Mich.)

CLARENCE E. MACARTNEY, First Presbyterian, Pittsburgh, Pa. "The Greatest Need of the Church today." John 1:41—"He findeth first his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah. . . ." Preached at Moody Bible Institute. (Sent by P. E. Hedberg, New London, Minn.)

G. W. ROSENLOF, First Presbyterian, Lincoln, Neb. "The Higher Patriotism." Matt. 6:33—"Seek ye first the kingdom of God." Preached at Lincoln. (Sent by F. H. Allen, Jr., Bryn Mawr, Pa.)

(Thanks of the editors are due the many readers of the Pulpit who a few months ago expressed themselves in answer to the question, "What was the most effective sermon you heard during the past year?" The above represents a selection from replies received.)

FOR YOUR SERMON AND TEXT

Title of sermon

Text used (write out the text)

Name of minister

Name of church

Address

THE EDITOR'S PAGE

The Event of the Month

BY ITS repeal of the major provisions of the neutrality law Congress has cleared the decks for America's entrance into the war. No legal barriers now restrain the President from inviting the incident or a series of incidents against which this law has protected us up to date. We are already involved in the war at sea, with our navy under orders not to await an attack but to shoot first. The only remaining inhibition on the President is the provision of the conscription law that the conscript army shall not be sent beyond this hemisphere or the territorial possessions of the United States. But this inhibition is largely academic at the moment because we have no army ready for an expeditionary undertaking and will not have for a long time to come. However, this technical restraint will be instantly removed when inflamed public feeling reacts to the incident which our naval participation in the war now actively invites. The fate of the nation is in the President's hands. But those who oppose America's all-out entrance into the war need not give up their cause as hopeless. Save for this opposition we would have been in it long ago. His knowledge of public opposition has slowed down the President's commitments for more than two years. This knowledge, if it is kept alive by public pressure, may even cause him to keep the decisive incident from occurring.

Repeal of the Neutrality Law

The Book of the Month

GOD'S BACK PASTURE. *By Arthur Wentworth Hewitt. Willett, Clark & Company. $1.50.*

IF I READ any more of Dr. Hewitt's books on the village church, I fear I shall have to resign my editorial job and return to the joys, the inspiration and the hard work of the pastorate. He makes me homesick for those dear days of the earlier years of my ministry spent in small communities peopled by country folk and surrounded by other country folk who came with horse and buggy as far as six and eight miles to share in the worship of God. Who can write about the rural church and its pastor as Dr. Hewitt writes? I know of no one. If I do become a village pastor again, I shall offer him my job as editor of The Christian Century and The Christian Century Pulpit. It would not be a fair exchange, I know, for he could do my work as well or better than I am doing it, and though I might not be an utter failure in his parish, I am sure I could not measure up to his high conceptions or to his notable achievements. This book literally glows with enthusiasm—intelligent and contagious enthusiasm. It is packed full of vital information about the country church, of reasoned arguments for its importance, and of irresistible pleas for its recognition in the strategy of organized Christianity. The book deals with the "temporalities" of the rural church, its worship, its educational task, its relation to other social and community organizations, its pastor's civic leadership, and many other items which concern every pastor. And the beauty of it is that the whole treatment can be transferred from the rural scene to the most complex city parish with invaluable benefit to the city pastor. Its moral earnestness is shot through with that salty tang, that delicious humor, that fine poetic feeling, and that hard common sense which have made Dr. Hewitt an unmatched interpreter of the glory of the Christian ministry.

A Thought for the Month

THERE are four kinds of people: those who believe right and live right; those who believe wrong and live wrong; those who believe wrong and live right; and those who believe right and live wrong. Consider those in the last two groups. The apparent disparity between belief and conduct has led many to say that it doesn't matter so much what you believe if you live right. There is just enough truth in this fallacy to make it dangerous. It is a tragic error to imagine that conduct and character have no vital relation to what one believes. The truth is that no man lives right who does not believe right. You can take it backward and say that if a man lives right it is pretty good evidence that he believes right. He may not have clarified his beliefs. He may not be able to use the orthodox formulas in expressing his beliefs. He may even deny that he is a believer at all, and call himself an agnostic. But if you could penetrate to the bottom of his heart you would find there certain unarticulated beliefs which control his conduct and mold his character. If these hidden beliefs could be brought to the light, it could be shown that they were in essence the same as the explicit beliefs which are cherished and promulgated by the Christian church, and that this good man received them, however indirectly and unawarely, from the Christian community, perhaps directly through the influence and example of his Christian parents. On the other hand, it must be conceded that it is possible for a person to have a considerable body of right beliefs and yet to live wrong. Such beliefs exist at "the top of the head," to use a fine antithesis coined by Professor John Baillie, rather than at "the bottom of the heart." The Christian preacher must deal with both kinds of believers. His task is a dual one: to clarify the hidden beliefs of those who do live right so that they may share in the fellowship of the Christian community, and to get those who believe right and live wrong to put their beliefs at the bottom of their hearts so that they may live right.

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Charles Clayton Morrison

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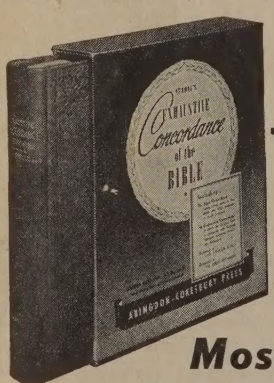

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